DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 286 997 CE 046 206

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TITLE Involving People. A Guidebook for Public Participation through Community Education. Target Topic Series.
INSTITUTION College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN. Community Education Center.
SPONS AGENCY Mott (C.S.) Foundation, Flint, Mich.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 59p.; For other guidebooks in this series, see CE 046 203-211.
AVAILABLE FROM The Community Education Center, College of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55101 ($3.50).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Citizen Participation; *Community Education; *Community Involvement; Pretests Posttests; *Quality of Life

ABSTRACT

This guidebook is one in the Target Topic Series developed to highlight issues and concerns related to effective community education operation. It is intended for the community educator and community education advisory council member who want to learn about the importance of community involvement to the quality of life in the community. A pretest covers material discussed in the guidebook. The guidebook presents a general discussion of community involvement and its historical antecedents and outlines the importance of involvement to the school, the community education program, and the community. A model of different levels of involvement is offered, and various vehicles for involvement are described. A final section provides information on how to make the political process work. A posttest repeats the pretest questions. (YLB)

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TARGET TOPIC SERIES

INVOLVING PEOPLE

A GUIDEBOOK FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

THROUGH COMMUNITY EDUCATION

MARTHA L. STANLEY

THE TARGET TOPIC SERIES is made possible by a grant from

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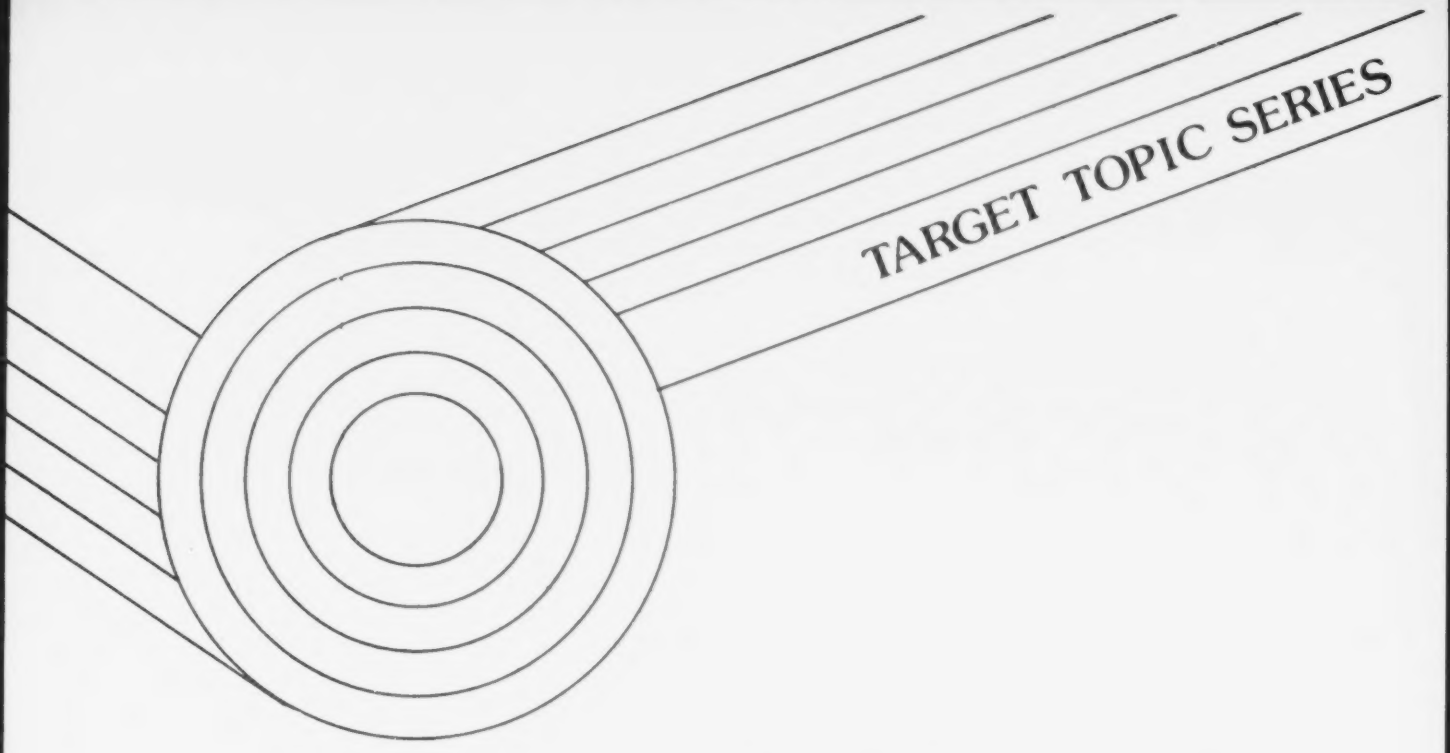

THE TARGET TOPIC SERIES

The Target Topic Series is a set of guidebooks developed for community educators and Community Education advisory council members. The guidebooks discuss many topics related to effective Community Education operation: Council Skills, Community Assessment, Planning, Public Relations, Finance, Programming, Legal Questions, Staff Development, Community Involvement, Coordination and Cooperation, and Evaluation.

The Target Topic Series is designed to highlight the skills or the issues that relate to each subject; and presents an overview which should be of value to the reader.

The Series was developed in response to an identified need for materials to aid and enrich the Community Education process in the state of Minnesota, particularly for areas that do not have ready access to inservice opportunities. The materials are applicable to Community Education programs throughout the country and are available for national distribution.

The Target Topic Service is written by staff members of the Community Education Center at the College of St. Thomas and by Community Education professionals in Minnesota. The series is distributed by the Community Education Center at the College of St. Thomas.

The interpretations and conclusions contained in this publication represent the views of the author and not necessarily those of the Mott Foundation, its trustees, or officers.

FOREWORD

Community involvement is the heart of the process of Community Education. Process means "how things happen", and in Community Education involved people make things happen.

Unfortunately, we tend to believe that very few people are really involved and that decisions about our lives are made by others in a fashion over which we have no control. Hopefully, this guidebook will dispel this belief and will provide a fresh perspective on what constitutes involvement and how this involvement can be nurtured to produce positive change.

Karen Osborne Schaub, Coordinator of Eisenhower Community Center in Hopkins, Minnesota provided preliminary research for this guidebook. We are grateful to her for her work, her dedication to the Community Education Center at the College of St. Thomas and her friendship.

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INTRODUCTION

This guidebook is for the community educator and the Community Education advisory council member who want to learn about the importance of community involvement to the quality of life in the community. Community involvement, in its many faces and facets, can have a profound effect both on the people who choose to be involved and on the groups and organizations that benefit from this involvement.

The guidebook presents a general discussion of community involvement and its historical antecedents and outlines the importance of involvement to the school, the Community Education program and the community. A model of different levels of involvement is offered and various vehicles for involvement are described. A final section provides information on how to make the political process work.

Involving People is written to help you recognize the importance of community involvement to individual and community health and growth. It is also written to help you understand that involvement is a progressive process that anyone can learn and in which anyone can participate.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

(The following questions cover the material which is discussed in this guidebook. We suggest you answer them before reading the text. Your answers will point out your present level of knowledge and will make you aware of areas to which you should pay particular attention.)

1. How has the definition of "community" changed with the changes in society?

2. Is there a single definition of "involvement"?

3. Define "community involvement."

4. How does community involvement change in relation to the political and economic climate of the nation?

5. List some examples of social movements in which involvement has played a major role.

6. What is the relationship between community involvement and our democratic traditions?

7. What impact has community involvement made on the public school?

8. What is the relationship between the process of Community Education and community involvement?

9. Why should Community Education be a promoter of community involvement?

10. What is the importance of developing a plan for community involvement?

11. Identify five levels of community involvement.

12. How can perception or awareness be viewed as community involvement?

13. How does communicating an idea or promoting an issue fit into community involvement?

14. Distinguish between participation in a program and participation which is community involvement. Is there a relationship between them?

15. How can partnership and power be viewed as community involvement?

16. Are people really involved and, if not, why not?

17. List some barriers to involvement caused by the agencies and organizations that claim to be seeking involvement.

18. Identify several ways in which Community Education can create an awareness that will stimulate involvement.

19. What vehicles for involvement can be developed through Community Education.

20. How does a Key Communicator system work?

21. What can be done to increase the level of involvement of volunteers?

22. Identify and describe three types of partnership that relate to community involvement.

23. What can community groups learn from politicians?

24. Why is it important to conduct background research about decision-makers?

25. How can support for an issue or cause be motivated?

26. List several strategies you might use when approaching a decision-maker.

27. What considerations should be taken into account when organizing a team to approach a decision-maker?

28. What tactics should be used when a campaign to bring about change does not meet with quick success?

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: WHAT IS IT?

Community Involvement, like motherhood, apple pie and patriotism, are words that conjure up something that is vital to the American way of life. We see community involvement as an answer to many of society's problems while, at the same time, typifying values that are inherent in the American way of life.

Community involvement implies everybody working together, believing the same, having the same goals, working for the common good--and doing it without conflict. The word community brings to mind an image of friendly hellos, people on the block raking their leaves on a Saturday afternoon, the neighborhood store, church bells on Sunday, and Memorial Day parades. And involvement suggests interest, caring and concern. It means getting into the fray, making things happen, being an activist.

Realistically, however, we have to remove the emotion from the words and look at them in the light of what is going on in our country--in our towns, our cities, and our rural areas. Community, in the sense described above does not really exist. We have flashes of the "old fashioned"community from time to time--perhaps on the Fourth of July if we attend a community picnic, or at Christmas time when, for a while, a world of strangers becomes a community of good will. But, the geographical community with defined boundaries, with a core and focus, with neighborhood schools, with long-term residents knowing each other, is, for the most part, gone.

Community has been redefined to mean any group of people who share a common interest. We have work communities, church communities, social communities, special interest communities. Indeed, in these communities, people do share interests and often work for the common good of all the people in that community. But often the communities are not as varied, as heterogeneous as the communities in which we live. They tend to be defined by sameness rather than by differences.

Involvement, similarly, has come to mean many things. The quiet church worshipper is involved, the person who goes to work each day is involved with his or her work community, the student council member is involved, just as is the student who merely attends classes. Involved no longer need mean carrying a banner or sallying forth into battle.

So, why is community involvement important? It is important because we have come to recognize a few things and to learn a few things. Our society is becoming fragmented, our culture is changing, the "good old days," which existed primarily in grade school readers aimed at a single class, white, solid-family (mom at home and dad at work) readership are gone. Neighborhoods are cut up by busing of school children, by the disappearance of the neighborhood store, by non-acceptance caused by "broken homes", by the invasion of freeways. People move every four or five years and this adds to the fragmentation.

Our neighborhoods become ghettos...ghettos of the singles, of the elderly, of blacks, of blue collar workers, or professionals, of people on welfare. The extended family is gone and the larger extended family of the neighborhood is gone.

And the result of our fragmented communities is a feeling of anomie, of being alone, of having to do it alone without support, of being estranged and isolated...and for many people, feelings of loneliness and fear. If people don't know each other, if they don't care for each other, how can they discover common problems? How can they get together to solve problems?

Along with the recognition of what has happened in our society, is the learning we have acquired--or perhaps remember. That learning is that people working together can get things done, can solve problems, can bring about change. They can make things a little better for everyone. We have learned that when people come together to work together very good things happen. People feel a sense of ownership... of the issue...of the problem. And from this sense of ownership comes community.

'Community' and 'Involvement' Defined

Community involvement is a necessary component of Community Education. If Community Education is to be truly Community Education the total community must be involved. Each writer who defines Community Education speaks of the importance of involving community members in seeking ways to meet the needs of the community. Each educational theorist who describes the philosophical base of Community Education includes the active participation of local citizens as an integral part of that base.

Unfortunately, community involvement, which is as important to Community Education as democracy is to freedom, is as difficult to define as democracy. The two words that make up the phrase--"community" and "involvement"--do not lend themselves to easy concrete description; together they are even more difficult.

Because of the lack of a single or simple definition, community involvement tends to be honored in the breech. In some communities nearly anything that involves people is termed "community involvement" while in others there is a cry that "we can't get anyone involved."

We need a definitional model of community involvement that describes the various levels of participation and commitment. We need to know how and why involvement of the community is essential to Community Education. And, more than the model and knowing why involvement is essential, we need to know how to encourage and build involvement in very specific ways.

What is community? Is it a geographical area, a group of same-minded people, members of an organization? If we think about how we use these terms in our own life, we know that the answer to all three suggestions is "yes". But it is "yes" predicated on the missing element--a commonality of feeling. A person does not move to a certain locale or join an organization or enter a new group and immediately feel he or she is part of a community. A feeling of community takes time to develop and includes the right to participate and a feeling of acceptance. No sociologist, social worker or educator can arrive on the scene and announce that a community exists. Communities are not dictated; they evolve from shared feelings.

From the foregoing it should be apparent that we cannot have community involvement if we do not have a feeling of community.

Now, let us look at the word "involvement". What does this word mean? Is one's presence involvement? Is believing in a movement or a program involvement? Is taking an active part--speaking out and working for a cause--involvement? Again, the answer is "yes". All of these are involvement. Involvement is based on individual personality differences, personal needs and interests, the cohesiveness of the community, and in some cases, on the intensity of the current issue.

Taken together, community and involvement describe a process in which, through which or by which individuals who share a common interest or goal come together in a participatory framework to act in ways that will affect the life of their community--whatever it may be. It is vital that we think of community involvement in

specific but situationally determined terms, rather than in global vagueness. Only if we know who should (or could, or might) be taking an active part in a particular cause, activity or process can we determine if we have effective community involvement. If we merely count bodies that are present at a given time, we are deluding ourselves into believing that there is the kind of involvement that can make a difference in community life.

WHY IS COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IMPORTANT?

Background of Community Involvement

Now that we have some idea of what constitutes community involvement, we need to know why it is important. Why shouldn't experienced, trained professionals decide what is best for the people? The answer of course is that such a method is antithetical to human cooperation. Certain commonsensical facts, underscored by psychological theory, tells us that humans will support and take part in those things for which they feel a sense of ownership. The desire to make decisions about one's own life is basic to our human nature, and if given the chance to be involved, people will tend not only to make sound decisions, but will make decisions that they will support and work for.

Certainly another reason that community involvement is important is because the concept is basic to the democratic principles on which this country is based. Even before the American Revolution, the colonists were making decisions about matters that affected their lives--how to cooperate to survive, what laws should govern, what learning was important. The Revolutionary War and the period immediately following the war, during which our basic form of government was created, are evidence of the importance of involvement. (Although argument could be made that leaders made decisions, it should be remembered that the framers of the Constitution were a community of people acting for the good of the citizens and were the forerunners of our representative form of government.)

Historically, involvement in the decision making process and in activities that affect community life has been an important feature of both the governmental and educational processes in the United States. The degree and the intensity of the involvement has varied over time, depending, in part, on the critical nature of a particular period and the presence or absence of professional decision makers. An additional factor governing the type and extent of involvement has to do with sheer size; there is an inverse ratio between the amount of involvement and the size (or perceived size) of the system that is to be impacted.

In the early days of the country, the citizenry participated as a matter of course. Town meetings were called in which the opinion of anyone present could be heard, and the decisions coming from the town meetings reflected the wishes of the community. As the population of the nation increased and became more diverse, people delegated decision making to institutions and agencies that they created to provide for the needs of the community. For the most part, these institutions and agencies served the needs well; however, over time, they developed their own identities separate from the population base from which they had received their original directives. This is not to say that the institutions and agencies did not provide for needs nor make sound decisions. However, the increasing remoteness of these groups tended to result in bureaucracy and self-perpetuation and both of these factors removed them even further from following the specific guidance of the people who created them. During times of economic prosperity and national peace, the services of the institutions seemed adequate, for the most part. During times of economic and national crisis, however, the institutions were either not responsive or not equippped to handle the new challenges, and citizen participation again became an involved, action-oriented process.

During the 1930's and 1940's--the time of the Great Depression and the Second World War--people joined together to provide for their own needs and the needs of the larger community. During the Depression, caring and involved community people organized community-based systems to provide food and other basic necessities. In a similar manner, large segments of the local community became involved in the "War Effort" by participating on draft and ration boards and in the local Red Cross and Civilian Defense efforts.

During the 1960's (the term given to the period from approximately 1964 through 1974) many people in the nation became involved in basic ideological crises facing the nation. The Black population, fed up with being always in the back seat of education, housing, employment and access to the governmental process, became involved in their own cause and took power over their own lives. The Civil Rights movement that emerged was joined by many of the Whites who became aware of injustices in a system that guaranteed justice for all.

Also during the 60's, the Viet Nam war served as a rallying point for citizen involvement. Young people, student groups, church people and liberal thinkers, through hard work and dedication, were able to convince the President and Congress of the futility of the effort. Thus, we can see that the crises to which people react and which motivate increased levels of involvement, may be based on ideology--values, beliefs and democratic propositions as well as on the more concrete actions of serving basic needs.

These very visible examples of community involvement which are cited are not, of course, the only instances of people coming together to serve their fellow persons. Even in times of peace and prosperity, critical situations and needs are recognized by people who act to alleviate the situation. These include neighborhood people acting in concert to obtain a stop sign at a hazardous intersection or community people working to obtain a new industry that will provide employment.

Community Involvement Makes a Difference

Historically and traditionally, community involvement is the core of the democratic principles and values that support our society and undergird our governmental structures. The United States is a participatory democracy which derives its power from the people. Thomas Jefferson stated: "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society, but the people themselves."

The constitutional power of the people is not, as we have seen, constant over time nor is it equally distributed among all citizens. As people and groups hand over the control of their lives to legitimately created groups and organizations, they become distanced from the decision making process. And, we must remember, that there are those people in our society who because of prejudice, economics, or personal circumstances have never had measurable control over their lives--decisions are made for them by whichever institution holds the power.

The demands for the right to participate in decision-making which were heard in the 60's were echoed in the 70's. In the 80's, the right to participate is becoming, in some ways, a mandated responsibility. The federal government is returning some of its delegated power to the states. Many states, following the same reasoning, are returning much of their authority to the local community. Looked at from a cynical perspective, one could say that both the federal government and the state governments are merely attempting to escape a financial burden that they find onerous. Be that as it may, the reality is that more services and programs will be administered at the local level and consequently there is greater opportunity--and greater need-- for community members to be involved in decisions that have a direct impact on community well-being.

One of the benefits of having decisions about educational and social programs made at the national level is that there is a greater chance for fairness (equality of resources available to individuals within the states) and completeness (most, rather than some needs being addressed). Communities, faced with providing educational and social programs from local taxes, may elect to forego some very important or critical needs. In the past, a moral minority at the national level was able to effect legislation that corrected economic, social and educational injustice.

Now, in order to provide for its own community members, each community must find (or develop) the persons who will speak up for serving the needs that formerly were met through state and national funding. In tight economic times such as we are currently experiencing, many people are consumed with providing for the individual security of themselves and their families, and may not have the commitment to support any programs that will increase their tax burden.

Our collective national personality has a sad history of being blind to problems and injustices in our society. Even if we were not totally blind, we handled problems and injustices by hiding them away, making only the minimal provision for their resolution. Equality existed only for those who were of the right race, religion, sex, socio-economic status, and who had no debilitating mental or physical health problems. Active participation on the part of the moral minority which encouraged participation of the members of the overlooked groups resulted, eventually, in social programs to alleviate some of the inequality. Without this participation, the blindness of society may have been allowed to persist. Continuing the metaphor, the current economic condition of the country, may result in an renewal of blindness on the part of community members. As seen through the cataracts of fear for personal security, there is a grave danger that only the most blatent needs will be addressed. Broad-based, active citizen participation is necessary to remove the cataracts so that, at the local level, we can provide the same resources that formerly were provided by other sources. To restate, a partially healthy community is a sick community.

Community involvement is necessary to maintain our democratic tradition of participatory democracy. When the citizenry gives away--or allows to be taken away--the majority of control over its existence, it creates a system that has the potential for abuse. Power begets power. Dictatorship and other forms of totalitarianism result when too much power is placed in the hands of too few. When this occurs, there is no longer any opportunity for input or monitoring. Therefore, community involvement is essential to protect and guarantee a society based on justice and equality.

Moving from this general perspective, to a more specific approach, community involvement is important to community betterment. The local governmental policies and the public policies of organizations that serve the community more accurately reflect the wishes of community members if they participate in their formulation. In addition there is a better chance that policies will be followed if the community serves as a monitoring agent. Public involvement brings a cross section of values to the attention of decision makers and thus provides assurances that the policies that are developed and implemented reflect the value system of the total community.

Community involvement can improve the nature and quality of needed services. Even in the best of times, there are always more demands for services than there are resources to provide services. In times of harsh economic realities such as we are now facing, a greater need to provide services fairly and efficiently exists. Public participation in decisions about distribution of resources can ensure fairness and efficiency. Moreover, by involving community members in the process, additional resources may be discovered. No single organization, even one with a trained and knowledgeable staff, can be aware either of all the problems it should or could be addressing or of all the resources to provide for its clients.

A sense of community identity evolves because of participation on the part of its members. If there was no interaction, no sharing about mutual problems, no efforts cooperating on solutions to problems, there would be no community. Participation breeds more participation because involvement in a community builds a stronger sense of community which in turn makes the involvement of others a greater likelihood.

At the community level, involvement is important to the larger concept of community development. Community development is the creation of a "healthy and stable community, where goods and services are adequately and fairly distributed and where people have a sense of their collective efficiency, confidence and power."* The economic situation of the community, the political organizations, the social structures, the educational system, transportation, sanitation, health care and other community concerns are all included in community development. Obviously a comprehensive plan for community development can only come about through the interaction of many groups, each of which must rely on varying amounts of community input.

*Don Davies, "Sharing the Power" A report on the status of school councils in the 1970's.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND EDUCATION

The Public School

The public educational system has its own history of community involvement. Paralleling the history of other institutions set up to serve the needs of local citizens, the amount of community involvement in education is inversely related to the size of the institution and the size (and consequent remoteness) of the community. The magnitude of involvement is also directly related to real or perceived crises within the educational system, or caused by the educational system.

Over the years, community members turned over educational decision-making to governmental agencies (federal, state and local) and to professional educators (administrators, teachers and curriculum committees). In times of quietude, the system worked well and, without rumblings of dissatisfaction, people were content to allow the institution they had created to provide direction. When the emerging competition between the United States and Russia resulted in the awareness that the Russians were far ahead of this nation in certain kinds of technology, educators were pressured to alter the focus of education and to stress math, science and other subjects that might produce a "catching-up" with Russian technology.

In the past two decades, community members have been demanding the right to be involved in decisions that affect the education of their children. The educational system like other institutions that have come to believe that they have the answers and know "what is best" for the people, has been reluctant to allow non-professionals to tell them how to conduct their affairs. Gradually, the doors have been opened and the community has been heard. However, the practice is to allow the door to swing closed to active involvement after the immediate demand is met, and the door tends to stay closed until the next pounding on the door caused by a new situation or crisis.

The results of the Gallup polls that show a decline in public confidence in education coupled with increasing demands from the public that it have a say about what goes on in the schools have caused many school districts to involve parents and interested citizens in the setting of long term goals for the district educational system.

Participation in educational decision making takes many forms. The parent who partakes in the conference dealing with his or her child's progress is having an impact on the school through providing feedback about what is, and what is not, good about the system in relation to a specific child. Teachers who hear the same message time and again will be motivated to maintain that which is good and perhaps to change that that is not beneficial.

Parents are involved in the schools by serving as PTA members and by functioning as members of mandated advisory committees, such as the Title I committee. Through these vehicles schools can inform the parents of educational policies and practices and the parents can give suggestions and reactions to curriculum, policies and procedures.

Schools invite citizen participation when they anticipate public misunderstanding or reaction. Open meetings are often scheduled to explain bond issues, redrawing of intra-district boundaries, or the necessary closing of underused school buildings.

At a more remote but highly effective level, the residents of a school district indirectly influence curriculum content, school fiscal management and district policies through the use of their right to vote for school referenda and school board members.

Community Education

Community involvement, as defined by Community Education, takes on a deeper and more all-encompassing meaning, than when the term is applied to other institutions or agencies. Community involvement is at the heart of the philosophical base of Community Education and is vital to, and often synonymous with, the important "process" of Community Education.

Each community educator knows that without "process", Community Education (or what is called Community Education) is merely a collection of classes created by administrators for people. All writers in the Community Education field stress the importance of the process through which community members determine the needs and interests of their community, locate the resources within the community to meet the needs and interests and recommend programs that will serve the needs with the identified resources.

We need to ask why "process" is so vital to Community Education. The definition of the word "process" is not sufficiently concrete to explain what happens in Community Education. Process means "how". It is the manner or method by which something is accomplished, but this broad definition could also refer to packaging of products or methods of manufacture. The process in Community Education entails the coming together, the joining in, the participation of people. Thus people provide the "how" of the Community Education process.

Process is vital to Community Education because it includes much more than how things are accomplished or needs are met. At the risk of pinning down this elusive term too tightly, we need to look at what more process means in Community Education.

Process often becomes purpose and sometimes it is the only end product sought. Through the process which is the involvement of people important changes are made in the fabric of the community. Through community involvement people come to believe that they have control over their own lives and over the decisions that affect their lives. Through community involvement barriers to communication are broken apart and formerly alienated people learn to work together for a common goal. Through community involvement, the anomie (or feelings of being indistinguishable in the community) disappears and is replaced by a sense of identity. Through community involvement, people come to know they can make changes that affect other community members.

THE PROGRAM/PROCESS ARGUMENT REVISITED

If we stress the necessity of having process in Community Education, where does the program aspect--the visible, measurable part--of Community Education fit it? Looked at realistically, in a true Community Education program,* there is no argument. Programs evolve from process. When the process, which is the involvement of people determining community needs, is effective, programs are created that meet these needs. Too often critics view the

*Some confusion exists because of the limitations of the English language and the way it has been traditionally applied in Community Education. A Community Education program is the entity that provides the sum total of classes and activities to the community. At the same time, any one of the classes or programs is referred to as a Community Education program.

programs of Community Education as being non-substantial, frivolous or not geared to the real needs that exist in the community. While there may be validity in what the critics say, generally they have failed to look deeply enough and are making a surface judgment. Because process is invisible, the critics may not be aware of the level of involvement that went into the creation of the specific programs. Aerobic dancing may not, at first glance, seem to be meeting an important need. If, however, during the process of deciding what the needs of the community are, the people involved looked at providing a program that would enhance health, be something in which all age groups could participate, and that would bring together a large group of people to build friendship, aerobic dance is certainly a substantial program that meets the needs of the community.

PROMOTING INVOLVEMENT

The role of Community Education in developing community involvement should be much larger than that of encouraging class participation or membership on an advisory council. Although these are important, they are merely beginnings.

Recall the six levels of Community Education.

1. Enhancing the K-12 program
2. Providing extended use of facilities
3. Providing programs for youth
4. Providing programs for adults
5. Promoting community involvement
6. Promoting community development

Advisory council involvement and the enrollment of community members in classes are evidence of the first four levels of Community Education. Levels five and six extend Community Education into the larger community.

"Why," one might ask, "should Community Education--a school based program--be concerned with community involvement beyond encouraging class participation and maintaining an advisory council?" Two very important reasons underscore why Community Education needs to be concerned with involvement and with the development of the total community.

The first reason stems from the mission of Community Education to serve the interests, address the problems, and provide for the needs of community members through the use of community resources. The community educator and the council, although dedicated, are not qualified to know all the problems of the community nor are they able, alone, to solve the problems of the community. People facing specific problems or who have specialized needs must become involved in order to describe the problem or need, help seek the resources that will provide relief, and most of all, to guarantee their sense of ownership and thus their participation in the methods of solution.

An equally important reason is that it is impossible to build a single healthy segment of a community within an unhealthy community--one that is beset by economic, social or individual problems. Schools have come to realize that they alone cannot create a happy, motivated well-adjusted child. The child is a product of the community. Problems of unmet basic needs, family stress, and rejection by parts of society all result in a child who is unable to learn and participate fully in the school environment. Virtually no effort on the part of the schools can make up for the influences of the community.

The same is true in Community Education as it attempts to provide programs that will meet the needs of community members. If Community Education is not involved in the development of the total community, its successes will be bandaids or partial cures.

Often Community Education tries to alleviate obvious symptoms without looking either for related symptoms in others nor for causes of the symptoms. This is similar to a doctor providing a local treatment to an infection that may be coursing through the entire organism, that may exist in other organisms, and that may be caused by some condition in the environment. The local treatment may be successful for the single individual, more than likely it will not. If it should seem successful, complacency sets it with its accompanying sense of accomplishment, and the illness in others is not cured nor are the causes unveiled.

A total approach by the total community--community development--is needed if we are to be truly effective in creating the healthy environment in which people can grow and mature and find the security and feelings of self-esteem that are necessary for individual and community health.

While there is sound logic in Community Education becoming involved in encouraging development of the total community, two additional questions need to be addressed. One: how can Community Education gain the credibility to act as a catalyst promoting change in a community? Two: if Community Education is able to establish its credibility, how can it go about developing the kind of involvement that will have a real impact on community problems; that is, what skills are needed and what techniques need to be employed?

As in other endeavors, credibility comes with success. If Community Education conducts its own affairs with community input and successful meaningful programs to meet community needs, it will gain a stature that will be recognized in the community.

Somewhat unfortunately, the early writers in Community Education likened the concept of Community Education to an umbrella. In the graphic representation, the umbrella was Community Education; the ribs of the umbrella were all other community agencies and groups and, of course, the umbrella provided protection for the total community. This thinking was more idealistic than grandiose. It would indeed be wonderful if some system or institution or group could provide for the total community. And, idealistically, all community groups, made up of involved and caring individuals, could very well come close to the goal of creating a healthy community in which each individual functioned at his or her greatest capacity. But this is an ideal. We must remember that before ideals can be realized, much time, patience and hard work are involved. And, even with the time, patience and hard work, many ideals are only partially realized.

In reality, Community Education is merely one of the ribs of the umbrella, and together all the individuals and groups that care about the welfare of the community build the fabric that constitutes the umbrella.

Viewing Community Education as one of the ribs does not in any way diminish its potential for taking a leadership role in promoting community involvement or community development. Nor does viewing Community Education as one of the ribs negate its role as catalyst for solving community problems. Community Education has as its philosophical core, we will remember, an emphasis on process--and process is the involvement of community members in determining needs and deciding on programs to meet the needs.

Community Education holds a unique position in the community and thus is better able than many other community groups to serve as a model for developing community involvement. Because Community Education offers so many opportunities for varied levels of involvement, it is able to encourage increasingly greater involvement of community members.

PRELIMINARIES TO PLANNING

Believing in the importance of community involvement is only the first step in the process of encouraging and developing involvement. We need to know the basis of our belief--that is, we must have a clear understanding of why we want people to participate or be involved. We also need to know what degree or level of involvement we are seeking for a particular endeavor.

Reasons for Involvement

In developing a plan for community involvement we must be completely honest with ourselves. The reasons presented earlier in the general discussion about citizen participation--preserving democracy and historical tradition, preventing feelings of isolation and loneliness, promoting individual and community decision-making that is responsive to real problems--are only valid if we accept them as valid.

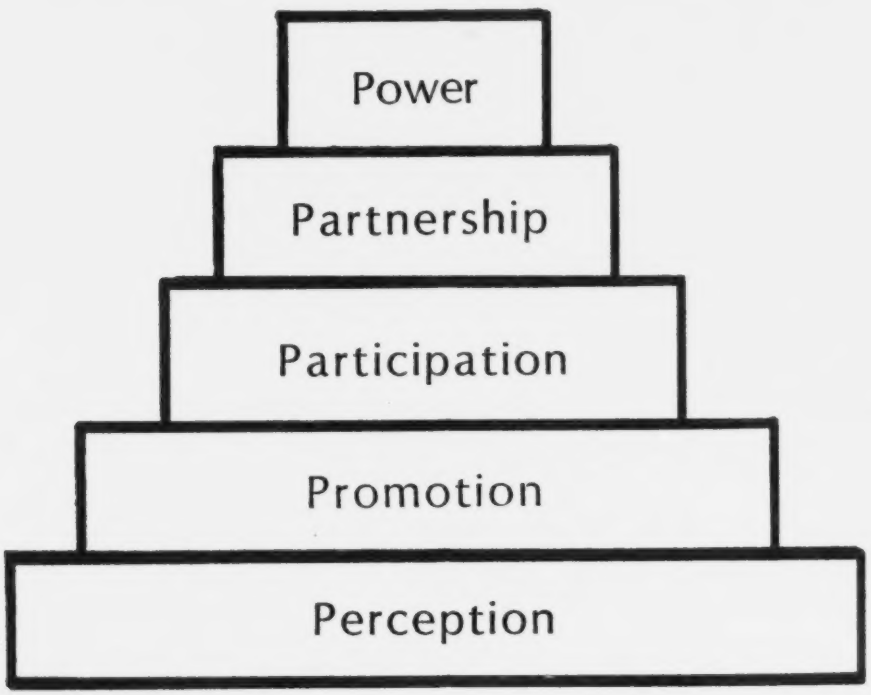
If, on the other hand, we are seeking merely to gain support for our program or if we are only meeting an imposed requirement for participation, we should admit that this is our purpose. These reasons for promoting involvement--gaining support or meeting a mandated requirement--are not without value. Indeed, they may be part-and-parcel of the deeper and more far-reaching goals of involvement. Too often, however, they become the total purpose for developing participation and the broader benefits are lost.

Levels of Involvement

The amount of involvement and the intensity of the commitment to an issue is situational. We need to keep in mind that who should be involved, when they should be involved, and in what they should be involved is determined by personality differences, the appeal of the issue, the timeliness of the effort, and other subjective factors.

We can consider that there are five levels of involvement or participation and these levels indicate degrees of contact or intensity. The five levels are: perception, promotion, participation, partnership and power. At the first level, perception, many people are involved and the degree of decision-making is slight. As we proceed upwards through the levels, the number of people decreases at each succeeding level and the degree of control over decisions increases.

The following graph presents a visual representation of the five levels of involvement.



LEVEL ONE: PERCEPTION

The first and broadest level of community involvement is perception or awareness. Too often we assume that people have a positive perception or are aware of a program or issue and that consequently their support is assured. We ask people to serve on councils or run for boards with no idea if they have the needed knowledge or commitment. We naively expect participation in community problem solving merely because we are convinced of the gravity of the situation. When people remain in their own back yards and in front of their television sets, we complain about apathy. And, when we witness this "apathy" over a period of time, we either give up with an "if they don't care, why should I" attitude or we assume power and start to "do for" those who won't do for themselves.

Community educators have a responsibility to create a broad-based awareness on the part of community members about Community Education and its programs, functions and problem-solving capacities. An awareness of the potential of Community Education is a prerequisite for future support and involvement.

The seed for future involvement must be planted by Community Education itself. We need to be good at what we do and we need to be visible in the community. It goes without saying that, in order for community people to have a positive perception of Community Education, the Community Education program needs to be broad in scope and far-reaching in service. When (and if) this happens, Community Education has a much greater chance of becoming a "household word". (Although "household word" is a standard cliche which means that nearly everyone knows the meaning, this is precisely the cliche that should be the hallmark of Community Education. The words "Community Education" should create an image in the minds of every household member of the community.) Only when people know Community Education will they be ready or able to give their support or play the role of promoter.

LEVEL TWO: PROMOTION

When community members know Community Education, they can then move into the next higher level of community involvement--promotion or support. Promoting or supporting a program or issue remains a low-level of involvement, but it is involvement nonetheless. The individual who does not support or promote an idea or concept (either in a positive or negative way) will be very unlikely to participate at a higher level.

Promotion is the active role of talking about, speaking for, and encouraging participation in an issue or program. Those who believe in a movement or philosophy--and those who disagree with a movement or philosophy--are actively involved when they discuss their beliefs and views with their families, neighbors and the larger community. Involvement at the promotion stage includes spreading the word about Community Education and all that it encompasses. It also includes directing people who express an interest or concern in an issue or problem to the appropriate forum for action.

People who have a well-grounded information base often serve as an informal referral service for promoting participation and a deeper level of involvement. While these people who function at the promotion stage of community involvement may not choose to be closely involved themselves, they are often the catalyst that motivates others to seek significant participation.

Those who promote interest in any area of concern serve two functions: they share the knowledge and awareness they have and thus add more people to the group that functions at the first level of involvement, and secondly they prepare themselves and others to move into the third level of involvement--participation.

LEVEL THREE: PARTICIPATION

In the context of this five level model of community involvement, participation means taking a role that has some visible or discernable effect. As used in this model, enrollment in a class or participation in an activity, is not, in and of itself, participation. However, it could be. The mere coming together in a class or activity can build the friendships or relationships and provide the forum for discussion of issues that will result in active participation. In addition, it is not uncommon for people who have benefited from Community Education programs to seek out a concrete position either as a volunteer or as an advisory council member.

However, for the most part, participation means physical presence and the contribution of work, wisdom, time and resources to a specific project, goal, or process. As mentioned previously, volunteers and advisory council members fit this definition. So too, do people who serve on ad hoc committees or who join together with others of like mind to effect change in a shared concern.

Workers are participators because they move an organization towards its goals. The person who mans the booth at the school carnival, the president of the PTA, and the church usher are all participating to help an organization or group do what it has set out to do.

Participation includes giving advice and recommending decisions to some higher authority or decision-making group. It is apparent that, for people to properly serve in this capacity, they must have moved through the first two levels of involvement and have incorporated these levels into their activities. The individual who knows the program or issue and who has opinions (either for or against) and thus bring the program and issue to the advisory body, is ably equipped to offer advice and share knowledge. Unfortunately, some advisors are asked to serve without having the necessary background of either knowledge or specific opinion. For the most part, community members who help in the decision-making process, come prepared with a history of involvement at the first two levels. Active participation is the stepping-stone to the fourth level of involvement--partnership.

LEVEL FOUR: PARTNERSHIP

The partnership level of involvement implies equality among all the acting individuals or groups. In a partnership, decision making is shared between the agency or organization and the people who serve on a citizens' council or who have organized to have an impact on the agency or organization.

The partnership level of community involvement as it pertains to Community Education generally exists (when it does) between autonomous agencies and organizations. These partnerships may be either formal or informal and may be a series of individual agreements or may be a network of many groups which have agreed to work together. Occasionally, the community educator and the advisory council work as partners. Although the ultimate responsibility rests with the hired director or coordinator, he or she has determined that all decisions (and, in some instances the execution of those decisions) should be made jointly.

Partnership status may be obtained in two different ways. When citizens, either as members of a pressure group or of an existing council, are perceived as having the wisdom and skills to make sound decisions that affect them or the issue they represent, the agency or organization which works with these citizens may grant to them the right to share equally in decision making. In this instance partnership exists because of mutual respect between the partners and because of the realization that the people who are involved have earned the right to act as partners.

The second way in which partnership status may be obtained is through the exercise of power. A group of interested citizens may be able to convince the agency and organization they are trying to influence that their view is the majority view and therefore it should be attended to. With sufficient strength, many groups are able to act as full partners in all decisions or in decisions that center around specific issues.

When strength, either of position or numbers, is sufficiently great so that control rests with the individuals or groups who are effecting decisions or working to bring about change, the fifth level of involvement--power is attained.

LEVEL FIVE: POWER

The ultimate level of community involvement is power. Those who reach this level of involvement have, for the most part proceeded through the four previous levels and continue to use the knowledge and techniques gained through experience at the other levels.

In this model, power refers to group power--the ability to exert control when acting in concert with others. Elected school boards, city councils and state legislatures are examples of groups that represent the ultimate in involvement. Most of these elected citizens have paid their dues and have gained the knowledge, supported the (right) issues, participated in the political process, and learned the give-and-take of partnership.

A less obvious example is the power that exists with successful pressure groups. The opponents of the ERA used the techniques of power to gain control over the vote that decided the fate of the ERA. Those who were opposed to the war in Viet Nam were able to marshall the support and secure the power that (eventually) put an end to the conflict.

People who are involved at the fifth level retain the right to function at this level only as long as they are cognizant of the importance of the other levels. Both elected representatives to boards and people who band together to effect change can retain their positions of influence or control only if citizens participating at the other levels choose to support them. Consequently, those who have legitimately earned power should consistently encourage perception, promotion, participation and even partnership when it is appropriate.

PREPARING PEOPLE FOR INVOLVEMENT

Who is Involved?

A look at any community may convince us that only about five percent of the people are really involved. We may also conclude that this five percent is comprised of the same people no matter what the issue or concern. This first glance is misleading. Certainly there are the recognizable community leaders who everyone knows--the school board, the elected government officials and representatives, and those people who sit on many boards and councils. But even within this most visible five percent there is no static group. Leaders come and go, interest wanes and new leadership develops. The "out-front" people--the chairperson of the council, the library board member, the president of the PTA--change over time. Even those people who seemed to have their hand in every issue, be it crime or Dutch Elm disease, are joined in the cause of the moment by different people for whom the particular issue is of personal concern.

It has been said that five percent of the people are truly involved, that another 15 or 20 percent are concerned, and that the remainder of the people don't care. These figures are used to prove to us that apathy exists and is so deep-seated that there is little we can do to change this fact of human nature. We are reminded of how few of the eligible voters vote and how few people come forward at public hearings on critical issues.

These figures only make sense if we remember the five levels of involvement. Those who are elected officials or who serve on boards are functioning at the participation level or higher. Even the person who goes to the polls is acting at the participation level. If people have not proceeded through the first two levels of involvement which include awareness, knowledge, and opinion formation, it is unlikely that they will have the interest or ability to participate.

Obviously, when we encourage involvement, our ultimate goal is not to promote public office for each citizen. If we keep in mind our reasons for wanting involvement along with our knowledge of the levels of involvement, we can rather accurately determine which people or groups should be involved in a particular situation at a particular time.

If, for example, our goal is to develop involvement in the Community Education program, our primary audience at the perception level is the total community and our audience at the promotion level could be class participants, volunteers and teachers in the program and community groups. The audience we approach to encourage involvement at the participation level is narrower. If we have done a good job of encouragement at the first two levels, it is likely that more people will be ready to take the step into participation than if they are approached cold. The fourth and fifth level of involvement will require us to provide training to specific groups and individuals and the number of people willing or able to be involved at these levels will naturally be even smaller than at the participation stage.

Once we have identified the reasons for involvement and have determined the level and the audience, specific community involvement strategies and training techniques can be employed to motivate the involvement that will stimulate community members and maintain their interest. However, before we can determine the specific steps to take to prepare people for involvement we need to know some of the reasons people aren't involved (or why it appears that they aren't involved). Many barriers to involvement exist, some within the individual and many that are imposed from the outside.

Barriers to Involvement

Many of the hindrances to involvement are caused by the very agency or organization that is seeking the involvement. One could speculate that those things that discourage involvement are intentionally created by the agency or organization and that they indicate a less than valid commitment to the principle of involvement. Indeed, sometimes this is the case. Other times the barriers exist unwittingly and unintentionally, but still are due to a fault of the agency or organization. Some of these hindrances to involvement include:

- Poor Communication

There are many facets to the problem of poor communication. Sometimes, communication is intentionally poor, either because the organization does not want the public to know about some matter or because the organization is not committed to involving community members. These organizations have found that by keeping communication obscure or at a minimum they are effectively able to discourage broad-based participation. This type of poor communication is evident when public agencies tuck notices of public hearings in the back pages of the newspaper or when language is deliberately used to mislead.

Even those groups who sincerely want involvement often discourage it. They fail to make efforts to see that notices of meetings are prominently put forth, and that the language used is such that it makes it apparent that all people are welcome to participate.

Poor communication sometimes exists because those who want to encourage involvement are unable to walk in another's shoes. Agency or organization people and leaders of special causes may assume that the general public has the information and background that they have. In addition, these people may be so entrenched in their own jargon that their invitation to participate seems directed only to those who "speak the language."

Failure to use the normal public media effectively can also serve as a reason for lack of involvement. Radio, television, and newspapers are a major source of public information and often they are not used as effectively as they might be to bring the message to the people.

Other methods that can help spread the word are not used extensively and this, too, makes communication less than it might be. Neighborhood organizations and other natural gathering places can be excellent vehicles for getting the word out and they are often overlooked.

- Unreasonable Expectations

Rather then let people decide what they want to be involved in, or when and to what extent they should be

involved, we too often have a pre-set notion about what we want. We tend to forget that the major purpose for involvement is to allow people to take control over their own lives. By laying down unreasonable expectations, not only are we disappointed, but at the same time, we discourage participation. Unreasonable expectations assumed by groups seeking involvement include conducting too many meetings, laying on too many tasks, or demanding more time than a person is willing to devote. Many people will be involved at a minor level but are not able for many reasons to make the large commitment that we seek. Agency and organization people sometimes confuse involvement with free labor, and while some kinds of involvement do provide the extra help to meet goals, this is not the primary intent of involvement.

Another unreasonable expectation is the belief that people innately have both knowledge and leadership capacity. Those who come to us with time and interest may soon become discouraged when they see that their capabilities are less than those with whom they will be working.

- Tokenism

When involvement is not relevant and results from a mandate or from competition in the volunteer numbers game, it will not be true involvement. People are motivated to participate because they want a degree of control over their lives or they want a say in making an organization, a group, or a community better. People are not easily fooled and if they play no real role they will soon be aware of this and will depart. Real participation includes having a purpose and direction and the opportunity to have a say in developing the goals of the group.

- Eliteism

Involvement opportunities often seem like closed shops. Even the most secure individual with knowledge, skills and high self esteem may not feel welcome in a group without a special invitation. Cliques in existing groups can cause both newcomers and those not in the cliques, to feel unwanted and unwelcome. During the

1960's and 70's advisory groups were required by many governmental agencies. They were intended to be a blend of policy makers and those whom the agency was intended to serve. These advisory groups were notably unsuccessful, for the poor and uneducated receipient of services often felt muzzled through feeling of personal inadequacy when interacting with the professional.

- Individual Differences

We are not so naive that we look at the "public" as a single entity, however, we often fail to look beyond the specific groups that make up the "public". We may seek involvement from senior citizens or parents of pre-schoolers and when we have one person or some people from these groups we complacently tell ourselves that senior citizens and parents are fully participating.

Our goal should be to provide the opportunities for each person to have a say over those things in society that affect him or her. Most people need a certain level of comfort, a degree of knowledge and a belief in their own value before they will come to the fore of involvement. Most people, including the skilled and educated lack (or think they lack) the comfort level, knowledge and self esteem that will allow them to come forward to participate.

We need to learn the techniques to provide the knowledge and build the self esteem of all those who want to be or should be involved. We need to learn to take people where "they are at" and bring them to a point that they are able to have control over their lives. Not every person is a potential leader, however every person deserves the right to be listened to. If people are afraid to speak or if there is no forum in which they can be heard, the purposes of involvement are lost.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES

FOR INVOLVEMENT

Having looked at barriers to involvement and keeping in mind the various levels of involvement, we can now address the concrete question of how we, as community educators, can provide people with opportunities for effective involvement in the interests and problems of their communities.

Sending the Message

Much of the work we undertake in promoting involvement appears to be public relations and communication, or even just doing our job. However, remembering that first comes perception and then promotion, and that these are the awareness and support aspects of involvement, it is obvious that spreading the word must be the important first step.

Many different education or communication techniques can be used to create the awareness and develop the support that are the prerequisites for moving into active participation.

- The Community Education Brochure

  The brochure will inform community members about Community Education classes and activities. A good brochure will include a statement about the philosophy and concept of Community Education and will list and describe the function of the advisory council. If the brochure lists activities and services of other community agencies and organizations, the broader role that Community Education plays in developing cooperation and coordination will be expressed.

- Needs Assessments

A yearly or bi-yearly needs assessment survey will both inform community members about Community Education and will provide an opportunity for people to describe their interests and determine problem areas. If the needs assessment goes beyond seeking a tally for developing enrichment classes, the public will become aware that Community Education is a vehicle for addressing problems and seeking solutions.

- Public Media

Awareness of the extent of Community Education and its effect on the community can be surveyed through the media. Many Community Education programs run a weekly column in the local newspaper. Unfortunately, such publication is limited both by the availability of the press and by the size of the community.

Urban areas may not consider the local Community Education program newsworthy on a weekly basis and very small communities may be hampered by the absence of appropriate media. However, programs in urban areas can work to promote media coverage of special events and important programs and, in addition, can submit information about registration for classes and activities to the newspaper. Small communities can promote their Community Education programs in the local "shopper" if this is the only generally distributed newspaper available.

Other media approaches should be considered. Urban areas and rural areas not well served by the larger press often develop their own newspapers. Community Education can be a major contributor, both in organizational help and in contributing copy, to these publications.

Community educators need to recognize that what is commonplace to them is newsworthy to the general public. A new program such as a national Community Education day, or a sponsored community event are ways to bring Community Education to the public eye. We need to recognize the difference between when it is important to work without recognition behind-the-scenes and when it is important to bring Community Education into the spotlight. Occasionally

a program will be so altruistic that it will not publish the names of the Community Education administrators or council members in the brochure. This is a mistake, for if we are not visible, we will not be recognized as having leadership capabilities.

- Inservice

Each inservice session is an opportunity to further the awareness of the Community Education concept. Unfortunately we have teachers in adult Community Education programs who do not know that Community Education serves many other groups in the community. Similarly, those who run programs for pre-schoolers may not be aware of the extent of Community Education. Because these teachers (and all others who work in or with Community Education--cooks, custodians, bus drivers and others) carry the message about the program into the community, it is extremely important that they are aware of all that Community Education is, so that they, in turn, can inform others.

Each inservice should include a presentation on the concept and philosophy of Community Education and also should provide information on the history, present program and future potential of Community Education within the particular school district. When people have this information they will be able to serve as ambassadors for the total program and may be the catalysts that encourage others to participate.

- Public Speaking

Many service and social organizations look for community groups to make presentations at their meetings. We can seek invitations from these groups and thus create the opportunity to let additional audiences know what Community Education is and what it does.

- Inter-Agency Cooperation

An excellent way for Community Education to dispel the notion that it is only adult programs or only something that happens in the school building, is for it to cooperate in the work and projects of other community groups. When we work together with other agencies on activities or join with them to address problems, we bring them the broader message of Community Education.

Developing Vehicles for Participation

People who are aware of a program or project and believe in its value will not become active participators unless they are invited and unless they feel there is purpose to their involvement. In addition, most people are not willing to jump into the deep water first; instead they tend to wade in gradually in order to develop a level of comfort.

We need to invite people, make them feel their contribution is worthwhile and, most importantly, provide non-confronting but real opportunities for participation. Community Education can offer, either directly or indirectly, the grass roots, non-confronting opportunities for people to take the first step in bringing about change in their communities.

- Key Communicators

  The Key Communicator system provides a non-threatening process for communication of interests and concerns. In this system, a person identified as the Key Communicator acts as the liaison between the school and the community. Information about the school or the Community Education program is presented to the Key Communicator either by phone or at a meeting of Key Communicators. She or he, in turn, carries the information to the people he or she is to contact. Individuals in each neighborhood know who their Key Communicator is, and can relay problems or concerns to the community educator through the Key Communicator.

  Participating in a Key Communicator system lets people know that their opinions are heard and valued, and prepares them for more formal participation.

- Block Clubs

  Block clubs are groups of residents that share a common geographical area. Block Clubs may be formed on square blocks, around homes facing each other across a street or on homes that back to each other across alleys, in apartment buildings, or on county roads. Their purpose is to bring people together to share interests and to discuss common concerns. The community educator maintains contact with

the Block Club and uses it for an exchange of information. News about the school and the Community Education program is discussed at the club meeting, and the interests and concerns are relayed to the community educator by the Block Club.

Block Clubs are a non-confronting, grass-roots mechanism for participation. People interacting with their neighbors on matters of neighborhood concern can gain both the skills and the experience that will serve them well if they choose to become active at a higher level.

- School and Neighborhood Newspapers

School and neighborhood newspapers provide an excellent way for people to share in promoting the interests of their own communities. Concerns that are specific to the neighborhood can be addressed, and those who participate in getting the word out are taking on a responsibility that is important for community cohesiveness.

We can't expect that people will come in off the streets and offer to write a column for the paper. As with other involvement vehicles, we need to ask people, one-to-one, to take on a specific task. Help of all sorts is needed in getting out the newspaper and there are plenty of tasks for people to do--planning, writing, layout, printing, folding, sorting and distributing.

- Community Fairs and Expositions

In many communities, Community Education sponsors and organizes community fairs. These events provide informational displays of many or all groups that serve the community--social service agencies, the school and Community Education, health services, libraries, service clubs and so on. Some fairs and expositions have a specific, rather than general purpose. Health fairs, bicycle safety clinics, and crime prevention clinics are also excellent methods for involving both groups and individuals.

Fairs and expositions build involvement in two ways: groups that may not ordinarily interact are brought together in one place and can see and hear what the others do; and workers who help organize the fair and work for its success are, of course, involved. Fairs and expositions are also excellent vehicles for educating people about their own community.

- Special Community Education Classes And Activities

While all Community Education classes provide learning and social opportunities, some classes and programs (often of a more serious nature) serve as a forum for active involvement. Programs that deal with energy, crime prevention, parent-child communication, chemical dependency and many others plant the seeds for dealing with these community issues.

Community Education can offer workshops in understanding the political process and train individuals to function in the political arena. We can sponsor candidate meetings in which citizens can hear the views of the candidates, express their concerns, and outline the issues that are important to them.

- Community Events

Many communities have a special day each year to promote the community and to bring people together to share in the celebration of community. Often the events have a theme that signifies something special about the community (such as a local crop, the town symbol, or an historical event).

These events, include the entire community and resemble family picnics or school field days. Food, races, entertainment, music, pagaents, contests attract many people and are a source of community pride. Certainly planning and participating in events of this sort represent community involvement.

- Special Audience Programs

Because Community Education serves so many audiences, there are ample opportunities for people to be involved in a program that serves them directly.

Senior Citizens programs provide older people with the right to make decisions about their own activities. Many programs for seniors include instruction on nutrition, estate planning, health care, money management and living alone and the knowledge allows senior citizens to remain active members of the community. A lifetime of living gives older people much to share and the wise community makes use of this expertise. Seniors can be invited to share their skills and historical perspectives with each other, with students, and with many community groups.

Early childhood programs often include parent involvement as a required component of the program. Parent-and-child classes bring parents from differing backgrounds together to learn about raising children. Most pre-school programs seek parent input either as active participants or in an advisory capacity.

Drug Education programs are often sponsored by Community Education. These programs often bring together groups of adults and their youngsters to discuss the problems of chemical abuse. Drug education programs do much more than educate; they create a cadre of informed and interested citizens who work together to address what is often a major problem in the community.

Literacy programs provide many opportunities for involvement. The participants in the classes are of course involved because they are learning to take charge of their lives. In addition, all those who work to improve the basic skills of community members are actively involved--the business person who notices the need and refers the student, the aware citizen who encourages participation of his or her neighbor, the volunteer tutor, and the group that serves in an advisory role to the literacy program.

Handicapped programs like literacy programs provide involvement opportunities for the participants and for community members who are determined that handicapped people should share in community life. Most programs for the handicapped are designed for the participants to determine what they want and how it should be provided. In some small measure, dignity and thus self esteem have finally been returned to this group.

- Volunteer Programs

Community Education and many other community agencies and organizations have established formal volunteer programs. These programs allow for a high level of participation and provide the volunteers with a sense of being an integral part of the agency or organization.

Participants in volunteer programs are able to function as effectively as full-time paid staff if their commitment is viewed as real and if they are trained to perform their jobs. In order to ensure that the abilities and talents of volunteers are fully used, we should:

* Develop job descriptions for each position
* Recruit formally and informally
* Provide job orientation and other inservice training
* Be available to answer questions and address concerns
* Give regular evaluations
* Supply rewards, vacations and sick leave
* Give exit interviews and provide recommendations for future endeavors

- Advisory Councils

Advisory councils provide their members with many opportunities to exert influence on the goals and directions of agencies and organizations. Because advisory councils are established to help the agency or organization keep in touch with audiences they serve, participation in a council is a serious responsibility. Advisory council members represent different facets of the community and provide advice based on the opinions and beliefs of their constituents. They are involved not only as members of the council but also as activists in their communities.

Many types of advisory councils exist. Some are made up of people who represent a narrow audience served by the agency or organization while others include representation from the total community.

The Community Education advisory council generally includes members from all parts of the community. Involved people serve on Community Education advisory councils because they are interested in discovering the needs and interests of the community and in providing programs and services to meet the needs and serve the interests. Most people who are selected to serve on Community Education advisory councils are well prepared to be active at this level of involvement. However, we cannot assume that all council members know about the Community Education concept or that they know how to participate in group decision-making. All council members should receive specific training in an inservice session which includes:

* Introduction to the Community Education concept
* Discussion of the role of the council
* History of Community Education in the state
* Background on Community Education in the district
* Meeting techniques
* Group dynamic processes

PROMOTING PARTNERSHIPS

No single organization or group is able to address all the problems and concerns of a community. And, all the organizations and groups, working beyond their individual capacities, are unable to do more than apply localized, specific band-aid solutions to the total community problems.

The current social, political and economic realities have placed a requirement on all community serving groups to provide for greater needs with less budget dollars. The only way that a community can maintain and increase its health is by groups and organizations joining together to meet the ever-increasing demands.

Involvement at the partnership level provides for a synergistic effect--two or more groups working together can produce a greater effect than the sum effect of each working alone. When individuals have the knowledge and experience of meaningful and productive involvement and when, as a result, they have sound egos, they are ready to take the risks and make the sacrifices that partnerships demand. Generally, involvement at the partnership level consists of individuals banded together by common concern or membership in a group working in an equal relationship with individuals similarly joined.

Cooperative Agreements

Inter-agency cooperation is a long-touted process of Community Education. It remains extremely important because it is at this level that most partnership involvement takes place. The partnership systems that are discussed later are workable but are viewed as idealistic. Therefore, the agency-to-agency type

of partnership is the most realistic and most widely used method of partnership involvement.

Inter-agency cooperation (a generic term) refers to school councils cooperating with other school councils, Community Education programs cooperating with community agencies, and agencies cooperating with each other on a one-to-one basis.

Inter-agency cooperation brings together groups and individuals with similar interests but different approaches, or groups and individuals with similar approaches but different interests. Some of the benefits of this combined involvement technique include:

* Reduction in duplication
* Recognition that not all duplication is bad
* Opportunities to share resources
* Opportunities to share information
* Ability to provide more than a single agency acting alone can provide
* Ability to be creative (many minds thinking in many directions)

A primary goal of community involvement is to build better communities in which individuals have a chance to grow and excel. Inter-agency individual partnership arrangements provide a major impetus for meeting this goal.

Special Interest Partnerships

The presence of critical issues in a community occasionally results in a partnership approach to finding solutions. Various agencies and organizations may join together to address such problems as drug abuse, teenage vandalism, illiteracy and crime. In these special interest partnerships, Community Education may work with other school groups, social service agencies, churches and service clubs.

Generally a plan for approaching the problem is designed by all the participants in the partnership. While each partner accepts specific responsibility for some aspect of the work, the total product is viewed as being the product of the partnership.

If the problem around which the partnership was formed is an on-going problem, the partnership may become a more formal group and may develop an identity of its own. Community literacy committees or committees to reduce crime may have started as joint ventures or partnerships and then became a separate community group. When and if this happens, it remains essential that communication between the group and the original partners be maintained.

Total Community Partnerships

The most complex and complete type of partnership is one in which all or most of the agencies, organizations and groups that serve the community cooperate to identify problems and plan for their solutions. Total community partnerships results in the development of a community plan that coordinates the efforts and activities of education, business, government, social service providers and community service groups.

Community-wide partnerships provide many benefits that cannot be obtained in any other manner. These benefits include:

* Identification of community needs by way of a system that cuts across the restrictive limits of individual organization's purpose statements.

* Increased communication that outlines and describes the purpose and capacity of each participating organization

* Understanding of areas of needed and un-needed duplication of services

* Opportunities for realignment of each group's efforts to make the best use of resources.

UNDERSTANDING AND USING POWER

Making the Political Process Work

Community educators are not "officially" politicians but they need to be acquainted with the political process and with political techniques in order to effectively manage their programs. Selling the budget to the superintendent and the school board requires political know-how. Obtaining a change in policy requires skill in political methods. Settling disputes between opposing groups requires an understanding of political strategies. Indeed, much of what a community educator does requires one to know how to build support, direct influence, advance and retreat at the appropriate times and deliver the clinching argument.

In addition to understanding how to make the political process work for the good of the Community Education program, the community educator has a responsibility to pass this understanding along to all the members of the community. Because we believe that a major purpose of Community Education is to help people gain control over their lives so they can make decisions that provide for their own growth and the growth of the community, we must provide the training that will allow this to happen.

Some people have an innate political sense; most do not. Some people seem to know how to influence others and to get what they want, whereas others either try and fail, or never try at all. A myth about political decision making persists. Those of us who are not skilled in the process believe that it proceeds on intrigue, secret specialized approaches, and on existing impenetrable loyalties. The myth persists because we, for the most part, are on the outside looking in. With training and experience, we can move to the inside and demystify the myth.

- Know Your Issue-Know Your Program-Know Your Cause

Any person or group who desires change or who hopes to influence decision-makers needs to be very clear about the issue. Just because a cause seems good and righteous to you or your group does not mean that it will appear good and righteous to another person or group. Just because a concern seems extremely clear to you, does not mean that it will be seen with clarity by those whom you are trying to influence. Before stepping into the arena, study your issue, practice articulating it and ask others to take a counter argument so you can solidly state your position and the reasons for your position.

Do research related to your issue or cause. Check newspapers and talk with people to see if a similar issue has been presented by another group at another time. If this is the case, attempt to learn what were the reasons for success or failure of that issue.

- Know Your Targets

Power remains an awesome word for most of us because it seems to indicate that someone or some group has control over us. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about power, is that it exists only as long as we allow it to exist. However we must not be duped into believing that gaining control over the powerholders occurs merely because we choose to withdraw our support. This method is effective at some times, such as when the electorate does not return a particular office holder to power. At other times (or at most times) we exert influence through a variety of techniques upon those who hold the power and bring them around to agreeing with our position on a particular issue.

Power, in a democracy, exists because the citizens have delegated certain decision making responsibilities to others--be they elected or appointed officials or the agencies and organizations they serve. Obviously, in a

complex society made up of complex individuals, any decision will please some of the people and will displease others. A decision-maker is buffeted from all sides and even the most prudent and judicious decision-maker will be pulled and tugged in many directions.

A key to understanding powerholders is to remember that they are individuals, with distinct personalities, interests and prejudices. Another key is to remember that most decision-makers have existing loyalties and these loyalties influence their thinking and their decisions.

Just as it was critical to thoroughly know your issue, it is equally as critical to know your targeted decision-maker. Some of the information that you should have about the individuals or individuals you will be attempting to influence include:

* Personal background, including such things as family roots, education, age, experience, values, political leanings, and so on

* Past record or voting history

* Previous position, including statements made in campaigns and public speeches as well as general statements made to individuals

* Existing loyalties, including information obtained through the above research as well as information about trade-offs and compromise with other decision-makers

* Other information that provides a complete picture of the powerholder including the names of secretaries, spouses and children

A card file should be set up containing information on each decision-maker with whom you will be interacting. The information in the card file will be helpful in many ways: it will help you plan the strategy you will use when approaching a decision-maker, you will have the background knowledge you need, it will be apparent that you have done research, and it will appear as if you are interested in the decision-maker as a person.

- Develop Support

Numbers speak, and the more people you can gather to support the issue or concern, the more effective will be your approach. Remember that the reason most people don't get involved is because no one asked them. Too often we ask only our known supporters to join us in a cause and overlook the silent advocates or those who might join us if they were persuaded. Share the ownership of an issue and speak about it with others on many occasions. If people seem to endorse the issue, ask them to join in. If people seem unclear, devote some time to convincing them. However, if people are opposed, don't waste time trying to convince them; your efforts are better spent rallying the "persuadables".

When developing support, take a lesson from the politicians: add unusual allies to the team that is working on the issue. For example, the presence of a senior citizen or a businessman on a team which is advocating day care will have a strong effect on a decision-maker than will a team made up only of working mothers.

- Use The Media

Once an issue is in the public eye, it is difficult for a politician or decision-maker to ignore it or sweep it under the rug. In addition, an issue which attracts the attention of the public media will also attract much attention from the general public.

The media is in business to bring news to the public. Therefore, if you are to have coverage of your campaign, be sure that it is newsworthy. The press may accept an invitation to an open meeting to discuss the issue. Finding a person in the public eye to support your cause will also raise the interest of the press.

Letters to the editor can help direct attention to the issue. The most effective letters in this section of the newspaper are those that relate to some recently published news item or which are written in reaction to an editorial opinion put forth by the newspaper.

Working with media people is a skill that anyone can learn. Of primary importance is the establishment of an on-going relationship with media personnel. Without an existing relationship, the news media may very well think that they are being used. When a team is being gathered to address an issue or to bring about change, seek at least one member who has access to the media.

- Develop Strategies

When the issue can be clearly articulated, the target to be approached has been identified and research has been conducted, and support has been mobilized, it is time to develop specific strategies to ensure the success of the campaign.

Obviously, strategies for any campaign vary with the issue, the target and the time. However, certain general methods are effective in any effort to bring about change.

If possible plan for a long term push; this is much more successful than the one quick hit. A buzzing mosquito attracts much more attention than the bite of a single mosquito. Plan several small approaches in order to keep your issue in the forefront of the decision-maker's attention.

Identify the specific tasks of the supporters. Some will work behind the scenes to mobilize community support and some will serve as part of the team or teams which directly approach the decision-maker.

Determine a variety of approaches in addition to formal presentations of your issue. Telephone calls are effective as lobbying devises and so are the relatively inexpensive mailgrams that can be sent through Western Union. Letters to decision-makers have a strong impact. Most powerholders are responsive to the vocal wishes of their constituents and most are concerned with their public image. Few people take the time to express their opinion on an issue to politicians and other decison-makers and thus an organized letter-writing effort can be extremely successful.

Plan some dramatic effects for your campaign. Powerholders tend to put out fires so the successful campaign should include some fires to attract attention and to provide the powerholder with a mission.

Learn how to create opportunities and to use them. Invite the decision-makers to visit your school or your program. Arrange to be photographed with them and see that a copy of the photo is sent to their offices. If possible, have the photo and an accompanying news story printed in the paper and forward the clipping.

Plan how to play the game of politics. Use your research to determine alternative methods of getting your message across. Determine which people in your group know the policy maker personally or know someone he or she knows. Use all these avenues to press your cause.

- Prepare for the Direct Approach

The face-to-face meeting between those who support an issue and the decision-maker is the most important of the campaign strategies. This meeting must pre-date any telephone or letter writing effort. If it does not, the powerholder may feel pressured and consequently may be antagonistic. Hopefully, an on-going relationship has already developed between the decision-maker and some of the people who will be making a formal presentation. If the homework has been carefully done, the decision-maker will have some background information on your program or organization.

Whether the person you are trying to influence knows you and your cause or if you are having to hit him or her "cold", it is vital that careful attention be devoted to selecting team members to present the issue. The number of people on the team should be small--three to five people. A larger group or a mob will result in a speech by the decision-maker rather than in the exchange of ideas and opinions.

Your previous research will help in the selection of team members. As mentioned earlier, unusual allies have a strong effect. Match team members to the personality and background of the decision-maker. A member of the same political party, race, religion, or neighborhood may make an instant positive impression.

When putting together the approach team, attempt to discover what each potential member evokes in people. This awareness of subjective appeal can be extremely important. Again, this is an attempt to match individual styles with what is known about the decision-maker's preferences. Team members can be found that evoke impressions of intelligence, warmth, homeyness, sophistication, involvement, "plain folk", worldliness and so on. Judge as carefully as possible which supporters of the cause have the greatest likelihood of creating the proper impression.

- Practice

Even though team members are well acquainted with the issue, are strong supporters and are articulate, it is still extremely important that the presentation be practiced. Role-playing is a beneficial method for preparing for a meeting with a decision-maker. One person can play the role of the decision-maker, and the team can present its case to him or her. Other supporters who observe the process can provide feedback and suggestions for improving the presentation.

- Presenting the Issue

Powerholders are extremely busy people and often difficult to see. A formal meeting, preferably on your turf is the ideal. However, more likely, the meeting will take place in the decision-maker's office, or perhaps even in the halls or elevators.

If you are meeting at the decision-maker's office, call and arrange an appointment beforehand. State the purpose for your visit when you make the appointment call and also arrange to send materials before the meeting.

During the actual meeting, present your cause or causes as clearly and succinctly as possible. It has been said that people hear and remember resonance, not rhetoric. Repetition of concrete phrases and examples that create mind pictures creates a more lasting effect than volumes of information.

Before leaving the meeting, get a specific reaction from the decision-maker. While he or she may not, at this point, be ready to assure support or action, some arrangements for continued attention can be made. Always leave with some conclusion, either with the next step outlined or with plans for further meetings.

- Follow-up

Bringing about change is a slow process. Even when we are convinced that our cause is so righteous that no one could help but agree, we will often be disappointed either by inaction or seeming failure. Successful change comes about because people persist and because they are willing to change strategies or to compromise on issues.

Throughout this section, the term campaign has been used. Campaign implies a long-term effort that exists until the goal is met. A very short term effort is similar to a battle rather than a campaign and we are well aware that a campaign is comprised of many battles. The purpose for this analogy is to remind us that a single defeat should not discourage future efforts.

Any issue that is vital and important deserves continuing effort. Truly involved people will provide the leadership to revise plans and strategies and to mobilize additional support among those affected by the issue or those who believe in the issue.

INVOLVING PEOPLE

Today's society is complex and difficult to understand. Roles are changing, new and different social problems constantly arise, and agencies and institutions are not equipped to keep pace with the rapid advances.

Community Education is in a unique position to help people adjust to the changes while at the same time maintaining the important values and systems that are needed for a stable society. In addition to providing classes and programs in response to needs and problems of the community, Community Education can take leadership in helping people realize their own potential through involvement.

Now that we are aware of the many levels and degrees of involvement, we will be less likely to join those who complain about apathy and cynicism. At the same time, we will recognize our responsibilities in encouraging community members to take ever-increasing control over their lives. We need to remember: people do care; people are concerned; people are involved!

WHAT DO YOU KNOW NOW?

(The questions at the beginning of the guidebook are repeated below. Now that you have read and studied the materials, you may wish to go back over the questions again to check your knowledge and understanding of the main ideas contained in the guidebook.)

1. How has the definition of "community" changed with the changes in society?

2. Is there a single definition of "involvement"?

3. Define "community involvement."

4. How does community involvement change in relation to the political and economic climate of the nation?

5. List some examples of social movements in which involvement has played a major role.

6. What is the relationship between community involvement and our democratic traditions?

7. What impact has community involvement made on the public school?

8. What is the relationship between the process of Community Education and community involvement?

9. Why should Community Education be a promoter of community involvement?

10. What is the importance of developing a plan for community involvement?

11. Identify five levels of community involvement.

12. How can perception or awareness be viewed as community involvement?

13. How does communicating an idea or promoting an issue fit into community involvement?

14. Distinguish between participation in a program and participation which is community involvement. Is there a relationship between them?

15. How can partnership and power be viewed as community involvement?

16. Are people really involved and, if not, why not?

17. List some barriers to involvement caused by the agencies and organizations that claim to be seeking involvement.

18. Identify several ways in which Community Education can create an awareness that will stimulate involvement.

19. What vehicles for involvement can be developed through Community Education.

20. How does a Key Communicator system work?

21. What can be done to increase the level of involvement of volunteers?

22. Identify and describe three types of partnership that relate to community involvement.

23. What can community groups learn from politicians?

24. Why is it important to conduct background research of decision-makers?

25. How can support for an issue or cause be motivated?

26. List several strategies you might use when approaching a decision-maker.

27. What considerations should be taken into account when organizing a team to approach a decision-maker?

28. What tactics should be used when a campaign to bring about change does not meet with quick success?